Summary of Resources

Permitting

Solar Permitting Packet for Washington
- *http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Code-Change-Alert-Solar-PV-SystemsJan2015.pdf*

Solar Permitting Packet for Oregon
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/NSC-OR-Permit-Pkg-B_04162015.pdf

Online Permitting Options for Local Governments
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NSC-Online-Permitting-Options_04-22-2015.pdf

Interconnection

Interconnection Best Practices
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Interconnection-Best-Practices-2015.pdf

Interconnection Training Page
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/priorities/interconnection/interconnection-training/

Financing

List of Solar Lenders
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/solar_nw-comm_loansheet.pdf

Washington Incentives
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/priorities/economics/wa-incentives/

Oregon Incentives
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/priorities/economics/oregon-state-incentives/

Planning

Solar in Comprehensive Plans
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Solar-Comp-Plan-final.pdf

Solar in Development Regulations
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Solar-in-Dev-Regs-FINAL.pdf

Homeowners Associations and Solar PV
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Home-Owner-Associations.pdf

Solar Ready Construction
- http://nwsolarcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Solar-Ready-Construction.pdf

Northwest Solar Communities

Powered by SunShot U.S. Department of Energy

Developing standardized tools to make the process of going solar

Simple, Fast, and Cost Effective

Purpose

Northwest Solar Communities develops standardized tools to make the process of going solar **simple, fast, and cost effective**. As residents and businesses increasingly choose solar, jurisdictions and utilities are searching for new systems to meet customer demand for permits and interconnection. Northwest Solar Communities has convened a team of jurisdictions, utilities, and industry partners to develop and share solar best practices.

Solar in the Northwest

Despite our cloudy reputation, we get plenty of solar resource to power our everyday lives. The Puget Sound area alone receives 15% more annual solar resource than Germany—the world's leader in installed solar capacity. Rooftop solar photovoltaics provides a clean, renewable means to light our homes, run our appliances, and even power our electric cars!

Communities
- City of Bellevue
- City of Edmonds
- City of Eugene
- City of Hillsboro
- City of Kirkland
- City of Portland
- City of Seattle
- Clackamas County
- Lake County Resources Initiative

Utilities & Partners
- Avista
- Energy Trust of Oregon
- Northwest SEED
- Oregon Building Codes Division
- Oregon Department of Energy
- Pacific Power
- Portland General Electric
- Puget Sound Energy
- Seattle City Light
- Snohomish PUD
- Solar Oregon
- Solar Washington
- Sustainable Connections
- Washington Department of Commerce
- WSU Energy Program

Permitting

Goal: Develop a standard process that reduces permitting time and cost while ensuring system safety.

"Permitting Packets", developed by the Permitting Work group, include information, examples, and checklists to support jurisdictions in implementing their respective state codes.

- *Solar Permitting Packet for Washington*
- *Solar Permitting Packet for Oregon*

Permitting Best Practices

1. Adopt a Permit Checklist for Solar Installations
   - See NW Solar Communities website for checklist examples
2. Establish Reasonable Building Permit Fees
   - Jurisdictions' building permit fees should not exceed the amount necessary to cover the costs of administering and enforcing the permit process
3. Provide Solar Permit Information Online
   - Information on fees, requirements, and the permit process should be easily accessible on your jurisdiction website.
4. Train Permit Staff in Solar Installations
   - Training building department staff and inspectors on the specific concerns for solar installations helps to reduce the time and cost of permit issuance and ensures projects are reviewed consistently.
5. Implement Online or E-permitting System
   - A fully online system would enable all aspects of the permit process – application submittal, plan review, fee payment and delivery of approved permits via email or a website, within a short period of time.

Interconnection

The combination of **interconnection** and **net metering** is essential to cost-effectively realize the benefits of distributed solar energy.

Interconnection Best Practices

1. Metering policy
   - Offer annualized net metering with monthly carry forward that is reset following a March or April billing cycle
2. Application process
   - Combine application process with incentive and / or permit applications.
3. Interconnection and inspection
   - Consider eliminating utility site inspections by accepting code and safety inspection results from the local jurisdiction.

Financing

The upfront cost of a residential system remains a significant barrier for many. An effective solar policy supports both **incentives** and **financing**.

Solar Loans: Some utilities provide low-cost financing options and some banks or credit unions provide "green" loans targeted at renewable energy improvements.

State Incentives: Many states and utilities offer incentives in the form of rebates, tax credits, and production incentives.

Group Purchase Model: Neighborhood group purchase campaigns, such as Solarize Washington, can help reduce the upfront cost of solar PV by providing a concentrated and informed market, streamlining the development process, and collectively negotiating with a solar contractor.

Planning

Local jurisdictions can support the installation of rooftop solar photovoltaics by providing **clear policies and regulations**.

Policy and Zoning Tools

Solar in Comprehensive Plans – Local governments can add goals and guiding principles that support solar energy development.

Solar in Development Regulations – Local governments can proactively facilitate residential solar energy systems.

Homeowners Associations (HOAs)

By law, HOAs in Washington State cannot prohibit installation of solar PV systems as long as the system meets all health, safety, and performance standards required by state and local permitting authorities. However, HOAs may establish "reasonable" rules related to aesthetics and placement of solar equipment. (RCW 64.38.055)

Solar Ready Buildings

Solar ready buildings are designed so that rooftop solar systems can be added at a later date with relative ease. Solar ready standards include prescribed roof load capacity, location of wiring conduit, proper roof orientation and exposure, and "extra" electricity panel capacity for the future PV system, including wall space for equipment.

Rights and Solar Easements

Solar access is the ability of one property to continue to receive sunlight across property lines without obstruction.

Solar rights codified in Washington law state that zoning ordinances cannot prohibit installation of a solar energy panel by the property's owner or resident. Private housing developments may impose covenants, conditions, or other restrictions to limit the placement of solar systems.

Solar easement is the specific, permanent right to have access to direct sunlight through a particular space. In Washington, property owners are allowed to enter into voluntary solar easements, which must be written and recorded. (RCW 64.04.140)